Interview with Marshall Green

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR MARSHALL GREEN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 17, St. Patrick's Day, 1995. This is an interview with Ambassador Marshall Green. Our subject today will concern Southeast Asia and, particularly, Cambodia. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Mr. Ambassador, I'm going to turn it over to you to talk about whatever you'd like to say.

GREEN: Cambodia has not been a central part of my career, which has concentrated on Northeast Asia—China, Japan, and Korea—and also the Pacific Islands and Indonesia. However, as far as Indochina is concerned, I was drawn into events during three assignments: 1) as Regional Planning Advisor for the Far East (1956-60); as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East (1963-65); 3) as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific (1969-73). Most of my comments will relate to (3) above, because of major differences between the White House and State Department over US Cambodian policy, including President Nixon's decision to commit US ground forces in the Cambodian incursion of 1970. I believe that my account of that period contains information that has not appeared in any publications to date.

The first section, which is rather short, relates to two trips which I took to Cambodia when I was Regional Planning Adviser (in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs).

Q: What period was this?

GREEN: I held that position from 1956 to 1960.

Q: This was during the Eisenhower presidency.

GREEN: Yes, that's right. I was working for Walter Robertson (Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs), whose job was then taken over in 1959 by his deputy, Jeff Parsons. I made two trips to Cambodia during this period. In 1956 my wife and I took a trip through the whole area just after I was named Walter Robertson's Regional Planning Advisor. At that time Cambodia was pretty isolated, had bad relations with (the Republic of) Vietnam and Thailand, on two of its borders. It had no relations with Laos, which is a rather wild country and hard to understand. Cambodia had been a French colony (Protectorate) and the officials we met there spoke French. When we visited Cambodia in 1956, we stayed with Mac Godley who later became Ambassador to Laos after being Ambassador to the (former Belgian) Congo. The Ambassador to Cambodia at this time was Rob McClintock.

I'll mention a few things about Rob McClintock, because they tell you something of the problem we had with Cambodia. He was one of the brightest people in the Foreign Service, but he couldn't help parading his superior knowledge and intellect before others. In the case of Cambodia, this was a very serious drawback, because there was only one man in Cambodia who was supposed to excite any kind of veneration and respect—or to be in the headlines. That was Prince Sihanouk. As the Prime Minister and the Prince, he was completely in charge of the country. The whole history of Cambodia during the last half century has revolved around Prince Sihanouk.

During this first visit I heard that Rob McClintock conducted business in a way that grated on the nerves of many Cambodians, especially Sihanouk, whom he addressed without the deference which Sihanouk expected and which was his due. Rather, McClintock had

a habit of carrying a field marshal's baton with him, which he used at the staff meeting I attended to emphasize his points.

Q: Oh, my God, no!

GREEN: We had problems with Sihanouk, on and off, all during the time that I was Regional Planning Advisor (in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs). As Regional Planning Advisor, my principal aim was to develop some kind of constructive relationships between all of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region with which we had strong commitments: military, economic development, or exchange student support. However, all of these countries were at each other's throats. So I spent four years trying to bring about a certain degree of reconciliation.

As I think I've told you before, Stu, Washington at that time could best be described in its relationships with East Asian countries as being the hub of a wheel, with spokes going out to all of these different capitals: to Tokyo, Seoul, Manila, and so forth. But there were no relationships between the ends of those spokes: between Tokyo and Seoul, between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, between Phnom Penh and Saigon, between Phnom Penh and Bangkok, and so forth. And, of course, Burma had no relations with anybody.

On my second trip to Cambodia in 1959, as assistant to J. Graham (Jeff) Parsons, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, I recall that we first visited Burma and then Bangkok. I left my wife there while Jeff and I flew up to Vientiane, Laos. From there we flew to the ancient Laotian capital, Luang Prabang, which is really out of this world. That's where the Prince Heritier (Crown Prince), who was really the King or the ruler of Laos, lived. But he had no control over eastern Laos, which was under Hanoi's control or over northernmost Laos which was under Chinese control.

But my point about the visit to Laos was that Laos was so distant in time. Jeff and I had an audience with the Prince Heritier—all three of us on separate divans. At a command from the Prince Heritier three servants came charging into the room and prostrated themselves

on the floor, sliding the last five feet or so, holding up cigarette boxes. We each took out a cigarette. Then the Prince clapped his hands and three more servants came running in, holding up lighted brickets to light our cigarettes. This is the kind of service you can't get in Washington. (Laughter.)

As we left the palace, we were serenaded by what passed for a military band. It looked like something out of “Babar and the Elephants.” If there had been monkeys and elephants playing instruments, I wouldn't have been the least bit surprised.

Then we flew down to Saigon (where Lisa rejoined us) with the idea of our going on to Cambodia the next day. In Saigon we learned from Ambassador Trimble in Phnom Penh that Parsons would be seen, not by Sihanouk, who was in Paris, but by Son Sann, who was the Acting Prime Minister. This shows you how influential we were in East Asia at that time.

Trimble mentioned that all the diplomatic corps was invited, including the Chinese Ambassador. This would have been Peking's Ambassador. Standing State Department instructions in those days prevented any American official from attending any party where the Chinese Ambassador was a fellow guest. So we immediately wired back to Bill Trimble asking whether the Chinese Ambassador was actually attending. At that point a tropical storm knocked out all communications and we had no way of getting our message through to Phnom Penh, not even through French rubber plantation owners, which was another possible channel of communications. However, all communications were out.

Jeff thought this over and decided to send me alone the next day to do the honors on his behalf.

So the next morning I set off on a special executive plane provided us by CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific). As we approached the Phnom Penh airport, to my horror, I could see what seemed like the whole cabinet and diplomatic corps lined up near the point

of landing, plus a military guard of honor. A “march past” was obviously scheduled with the troops all dressed up with their pennants and other regalia.

When we landed, and I stumbled out of the plane, there was the Cambodian Chief of Protocol. He asked, “O# est M. Parsons?” (Where is Mr. Parsons?) I had to explain Mr. Parsons had a “crise d'estomac” (stomach ache) and could not travel on the plane “car il manque un w.c.” (as it lacked a toilet). The Cambodian officials were crestfallen. They dismissed the band and all of the rest of the welcoming party. I went to the Embassy car waiting for me, and there was Ambassador Trimble. He was absolutely ashen-faced. He said, “Didn't you get my telegram?” I said, “No, what telegram?” He said, “I wired that the Chinese Ambassador wouldn't' dream of going to any party where an American official was going to be the guest of honor.” I said, “Well, we never got it.” He said, “What are we going to do? We've got to go ahead with this big party.” I said, “Let's send the plane back.” It wasn't very far—the round trip would take about two hours. The next thing we knew, two or three hours later, Jeff Parsons arrived with my wife, with Jeff lamely explaining to the Chief of Protocol that he had been miraculously cured.

There was a big ceremony out at the airport. Jeff went through all of the honors denied me, while the Cambodians acted as if nothing was amiss. That evening we attended a lavish dinner at the palace seated at the longest table and the finest nappery I had ever seen, all under a row of massive chandeliers. Jeff Parsons had the seat of honor, next to the Acting Prime Minister. Everyone was served course after course of exotic foods—all, that is, except Jeff. All he was given was a bowl of boiled rice, out of thoughtful consideration for his indisposition. That's the way the Cambodians got back at him (Laughter), and it gives you a sampling of how we deal with Cambodia and how Cambodians deal with us.

Q: Let me ask you. In 1956, where did Cambodia rank in Pacific or East Asian affairs?

GREEN: I would say that it ranked rather low until we became more involved in the wars in Indochina after 1963. We were increasingly concerned over how North Vietnam was violating Cambodia's neutrality, largely in the form of its Ho Chi Minh Trail to South Vietnam which led through Cambodia.

Q: But couldn't we prevail on those who had signed the Geneva Accords of 1954 to reaffirm support for Cambodia's neutrality?

GREEN: Nothing effective could be done through diplomatic channels because of Hanoi's obduracy. Since both Moscow and Peking were competing for influence with Hanoi, they refused to take issue with Hanoi's position in this matter.

Q: And I assume Cambodia lacked the military power to keep the North Vietnamese out.

GREEN: Absolutely, and that's why Sihanouk felt so strongly that Cambodia's only hope for survival as a nation lay in trying to gain as much international support as possible for Cambodia's neutral status. With that I agreed, much as I disliked Sihanouk personally with his vanities, prickliness, squeaky voice, and long periodic absences from Cambodia to take “the cure” on the French Riviera. He was nevertheless revered by many Cambodians as “the soul” of his country.

Q: Now, as I recall, you left the Far East Bureau to become Ambassador to Indonesia from 1965 to 1969. Did you have any dealings with Cambodia during that period?

GREEN: No, but neither did the US government have much contact. That had much to do with some ill-advised CIA operations against Dap Chuon, a Cambodia provincial governor, which led to Sihanouk's refusal to receive our newly appointed Ambassador to Cambodia, Randy Kidder. (So in effect we had no diplomatic relations with Cambodia from 1965 to 1969.)

On August 17, 1965, shortly after my arrival in Indonesia as Ambassador, President Sukarno of Indonesia announced before a huge national day gathering, including delegations from China and North Korea, the formation of a new Peking-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Jakarta-Phnom Penh axis. In actuality this did not mean that Cambodia had abandoned its neutrality or that it had closed ranks with the Asian communist countries in any way. What it did signify was Sihanouk's personal friendship with Sukarno and his desire to gain greater leverage in his dealings with Hanoi.

Q: You mentioned that normal diplomatic relations were restored between Washington and Phnom Penh in 1969, and, as I recall, this was the result of goodwill missions President Johnson sent to Cambodia, one of those missions being headed by Chester Bowles, our Ambassador to India at that time. Now early in 1969 you were detailed to our delegation at the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam. How did Cambodia feature in those talks?

GREEN: Surprisingly little, to the best of my memory. Of course, it was at that time, early in 1969, that the US was beginning a series of secret B-52 attacks against Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia. But at that time we knew nothing about those air raids, either in Paris or in the State Department. (Secretary Rogers may have been informed. I just don't know.)

Q: Yet Sihanouk must have been aware of these B-52 raids involving Cambodian targets. Why didn't he protest?

GREEN: I can only suppose that, if he did know, he kept quiet about it, because there wasn't much he could do to stop the raids and he wouldn't want to advertise his inability to do so. Moreover, if he did know, he might have derived some satisfaction that the hated Vietnamese in Cambodia were being bombed.

Q: But there must have been some American officials in Phnom Penh who knew. Here you are sitting in a country which was...

GREEN: You would think so, Stu, but in fact no American in Phnom Penh or Washington was in the know except for very few in the White House, DOD and probably CIA. Besides, we had no official relations with Cambodia at that time.

Let me now turn to a major development that occurred in September 1969 when Sihanouk visited Hanoi to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral. While in Hanoi, he entered into certain secret agreements with the North Vietnamese Prime Minister regarding the amounts of North Vietnamese supplies Sihanouk would allow to be shipped through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville to Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces operating in easternmost Cambodia against the South Vietnamese. The amounts involved were not large.

Q: How long did this so-called Hanoi-Phnom Penh understanding last?

GREEN: Not long. Some weeks after Sihanouk's trip to Hanoi, he tried to visit two northern provinces (Mondolkiri and Ratnakiri) but he found that he couldn't even enter these provinces which were under the tight control of Hanoi. That's when Sihanouk suddenly realized the true dimensions of the problem he faced in keeping the Vietnamese out of his country. It was probably at this point that he decided on the fateful trip to Moscow and Peking that he undertook several months later.

Q: How did our government react to all these developments?

GREEN: I don't recall that we were aware of all the foregoing events until a bit later. On the other hand, we had a number of practical problems in our relations with Cambodia, problems that involved Congress.

It was in October 1969 that I first met with Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield at the suggestion of Secretary Rogers (and presumably with White House approval).

One of the practical issues was to find out whether Congress would be likely to approve the funds needed to meet Cambodian defoliation claims against the US I can't recall the

origin or reasons for those claims but I do recall that both Mansfield, and subsequently Nixon, believed such claims should be paid by the US In fact, John Holdridge, an FSO detailed to Kissinger's staff, phoned me to say that the President reacted very favorably to the idea advanced in a memo I wrote. I mention this point specifically because it shows how closely the White House and State were cooperating on Cambodia at this stage, both together and with Congress.

Another issue I discussed with Mansfield was the question of assigning any CIA personnel to our Embassy in Phnom Penh. State was opposed, while the White House favored it. But both CIA (Dick Helms) and Mansfield sided with State on this, and the idea was dropped because of Sihanouk's hypersensitivity to the CIA after the ill-fated Dap Chuon incident.

Q: Turning to the fundamental issue of Cambodia's future, how did the US plan to cope with the way North Vietnam seemed to be taking over parts of Cambodia. You mentioned two provinces already under their effective control, as well as the Ho Chi Minh Trail and Viet Cong privileged sanctuaries in areas of Cambodia bordering South Vietnam.

GREEN: At that stage—that is in late 1969 and early 1970—the White House and State seemed to be agreed on doing all we could to uphold Cambodia's neutrality. That seemed to be the only effective way of preserving Cambodia's territorial integrity.

With the approval of Secretary Rogers, I met several times with French Ambassador Lucet in Washington to discuss how best to promote international support for Cambodia's neutrality, since the French seemed to be so keen on the idea. I also visited Paris to discuss this issue with Froment-Meurice who was my counterpart in the Quai d'Orsay (French Foreign Ministry), and the French were seeking to promote support for Cambodian neutrality with China through the efforts of their Ambassador in Peking, Etienne Manac'h.

Q: Wasn't there some kind of international group composed of representatives of Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia that was seeking agreement among all the principal powers on respect for Cambodia's neutrality?

GREEN: You're right, but I can't recall the timing of this international group's efforts. I think it was a bit later that they visited Washington as well as Moscow, Peking, London and other key capitals. But their effort got no positive results because of Hanoi's strong opposition conveyed to Moscow and Peking. Anyway, it was all a futile exercise because of what was about to happen.

Q: What was that?

GREEN: Sihanouk left Cambodia in late January 1970 for France where he planned to spend a couple of months on the Riviera for health reasons. He did this often, but on this occasion he may have had in mind to extend his absence from Cambodia in order to visit Moscow and Peking with regard to North Vietnam's operations in Cambodia. Anyway, Sihanouk departed for Paris, leaving the government in the hands of General Lon Nol and his Foreign Minister Sirik Matak.

During Sihanouk's absence in France, there were growing student-led demonstrations in Phnom Penh against corruption involving the Sihanouk government in general, prominently including Princess Monique, Sihanouk's wife, who was running gambling casinos. There was also resentment against Sihanouk's inability to keep the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. Overall, it was clear that the better educated Cambodians were tired of Sihanouk's rule and had no trouble in gaining the support of students and the military. The peasantry was not involved, remaining loyal to Sihanouk.

Starting with demonstrations in Svay Rieng Province, followed by the sacking of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Embassies in Phnom Penh by thousands of youth (probably

with Lon Nol's connivance), Sihanouk angrily left France for Moscow on March 13. It was at that stage the views of State and the White House began to diverge.

The deposing of Sihanouk by unanimous vote of the National Assembly on March 18 marked the beginning of a new era in Cambodia, which the State Department saw as fraught with dangers but which the White House saw in terms of opportunities to build up Lon Nol and strengthen the FANK (Cambodian army). President Nixon asked me to draft several personal Nixon-to-Lon Nol telegrams containing rather extravagant expressions of friendship and support. I was concerned that Lon Nol would read into these messages a degree of US military support and commitment that exceeded what our government could deliver on (given Congressional attitudes in particular).

I also regarded Lon Nol as lacking the qualities needed to lead his country out of its mess. I further downgraded him for having sent his family to Singapore for its safety, while the US kept its Embassy families in Phnom Penh partly in order to show our confidence in the Lon Nol government.

Q: But hadn't things progressed to the point where any restoration of Sihanouk was out of the question?

GREEN: You're right, Stu. A solution based on Sihanouk's restoration was by then out of the question, at least for an indefinite time. So what to do?

This prompted me to prepare a recommendation in the form of a 4-page memorandum reviewed and approved by my colleagues in State, including INR. With Rogers' approval, it was sent to Al Haig, Kissinger's deputy, since he was emerging as the key man in the White House on Cambodian policy.

The memo analyzed Peking's and Hanoi's conflicting interests and motivations with regard to Cambodia. Peking, for example, probably saw its interests served by an Indochina

composed of separate “independent” states, whereas Hanoi seemed bent on making all of Indochina subservient to Hanoi.

As to US policy, I warned against active US intervention in Cambodia since that would inevitably connote a continuing US responsibility to sustain its government and that could not be achieved without a sustained large deployment of US forces there—an eventuality which was politically impossible given the mood of our Congress and people. Under the circumstances, our policy should be one of “waiting on events, saying little except acknowledging our broad support for Cambodia's neutrality.” (France was still hoping to entice Sihanouk back to France and thence to have him return to Cambodia possibly with Soviet and even Chinese connivance.) As to South Vietnamese cross-border operations against communist sanctuaries in Cambodia, that should be encouraged but without any US involvement, for we must do all possible to support the case for Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity.

My memo was ignored/rejected by the White House. Haig, in fact, urged US intervention, and the President, and then Kissinger (somewhat reluctantly), agreed.

At about this time (early April 1970), differences arose within the State Department over the issue of US military weapons assistance to Cambodia. All of us were opposed to US force involvement, but Bill Sullivan (my deputy who was also chairman of the Interagency Task Force on Vietnam) favored sizeable US arms assistance to Cambodia, insisting that all such assistance had to be overt. Concealment was both impossible and politically unacceptable. I argued that Congress would never approve arms assistance to Cambodia, at least not on any meaningful scale. Rogers supported Sullivan until he learned of how strong Congress' opposition was.

Q: So what could be done to deal with the build-up of Vietnamese communist sanctuaries in Cambodia? After all, we were committed to a policy of Vietnamization; yet it was going

to be most difficult to carry through successfully on that policy, if the communists could operate increasingly from bases in Cambodia.

GREEN: Well, I felt that rather than trying to arm and equip the Cambodians (something Congress strongly opposed), we should encourage the South Vietnamese to conduct raids against these sanctuaries in Cambodia. However, Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams evidently sided with the White House in believing that the South Vietnamese were unable to conduct successful raids against these sanctuaries without strong US support. My reaction to that thesis was: well, if that's so, then our Vietnamization program was a clear failure—and we will never be able to get out of the Vietnam quagmire.

It was at that point, around April 20, 1970, that Lon Nol sent Nixon a long telegraphic request for weapons to defend Cambodia. The request far exceeded levels which even the White House felt our Congress would support.

So, at that point, Nixon evidently came up with a stratagem to gain strong Congressional approval for the secret plan he had evidently been drawing up with the approval of Bunker and Abrams (but completely behind the back of the State Department, including Rogers). He sent Rogers on April 27 (I believe) to the Hill to gain Senate support for a strong South Vietnamese attack against the sanctuary areas in Cambodia. I accompanied Rogers.

Rogers told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that we had just received a request from Lon Nol for US military equipment. Senator Fulbright asked for specifics about what kinds of weapons, and in what quantities.

At Rogers' request, I then read out the list of specific requests. Fulbright exploded: “Why that must amount to over half a billion dollars!” Then Rogers said: “You tell them, Marshall, what we figure it all adds up to.”

I told the Committee that it amounted to $1.4 billion.

This shock treatment had its calculated effect. Said Senator Church (with the nodding assent of his colleagues): “I have no objection to South Vietnamese involvement in Cambodia. Cross-border operations are okay. Here, in fact, is a good place to test the effectiveness of Vietnamization.” Said Senator Cooper: “The President now has support for Vietnamization. Let's not destroy that.”

Now, what Rogers didn't tell the Senators (evidently because Rogers didn't know) was that the White House was not just seeking Congressional endorsement for South Vietnamese attacks against the sanctuaries but also to have these attacks supported by US ground forces. All this was, of course, to lower Rogers' standing with Congress: either he knew and was artfully deceptive, or he didn't know and was without influence.

Q: When did you first learn of Nixon's decision to commit US forces in the Cambodian incursion?

GREEN: Let's see. I learned of it the day before the incursion was launched on April 30. So that would be at the WASAG meeting on the morning of April 29. I was astounded when Kissinger mentioned the President's decision to commit US ground forces. When I registered my objections as State representative at that meeting, Kissinger said the operation was already approved by the President. I could see what a spot the decision put Rogers in with the SFRC.

Rogers was subdued when I called him about the WASAG meeting. I gathered he had just given his reluctant consent to this ill-advised operation.

I was with Rogers in his hideaway office on the 7th floor of the State Department late in the evening of April 30, listening to Nixon's announcement over TV of his rationale for ordering the incursion including US ground forces. As Nixon concluded his maudlin remarks about the US otherwise appearing as a “pitiful, helpless giant,” Rogers snapped off the TV set,

muttering, “The kids are going to retch.” He clearly foresaw how the speech was going to inflame the campuses. That was several days before Kent State.

Q: That was the incident when the Ohio National Guard fired on the Kent State campus protestors, killing three.

GREEN: Shortly after the President's TV performance, there were several of Kissinger's staff who resigned in protest. Less spectacular was the letter of protest signed by 200 in the State Department, including 50 FSO's. However, not a single member of my bureau (EA) was among the signers, for which reason Rogers rewarded me by naming me chairman of a new special group on Southeast Asia, which held weekly meetings for the next 18 months, and submitted analyses and recommendations to the Secretary of State. It had little influence with the White House.

Q: Returning to the morning of May 1, 1970—the day of the incursion, what, in fact, was the State Department's responsibilities in supporting the President's decision?

GREEN: As usual, in such situations, we in State, responsive to White House direction, immediately set about the task of giving diplomatic, VOA and other PR support to the President's decision (including explanations to Lon Nol why he was not consulted on the incursion). As a May 9 WASAG meeting in the White House basement concluded, Nixon wandered in and took an empty seat next to mine at HAK's conference table. He turned to me and said something to the effect that, whereas I had opposed the incursion, he appreciated the fact that I loyally carried out the President's decision.

Q: Was that a compliment or a threat?

GREEN: Probably both. All during May, I was the leading State Department briefer on events leading up to, and justifying, the incursion. I had to put up with some heckling in the State Department auditorium, but, by and large, the briefings went well, since we were assisted by a lot of “factual” information supplied by our intelligence regarding enemy

losses of ammo dumps and the like in sanctuary areas. But the Senate, especially the SFRC, reflecting the angry mood of the media and campuses, finally passed the Cooper-Church amendment on June 30. By then, a reluctant Nixon had already ordered the withdrawal of US forces from Cambodia. I suspect Rogers had some influence on that decision.

Meanwhile Alex Johnson under White House pressure, had set up an informal group of legal and pol-mil advisers to figure out ways in which the US could most effectively provide aid to Cambodia in the face of all the legal restrictions now in force. Tom Pickering proved to be the most effective member of this group which abided by the letter, but not the spirit, of Congressional restrictions.

From May onward, two of my particular headaches (which put me at odds with HAK and Haig) were: (1) White House efforts to involve Southeast Asian countries, especially Indonesia, in support of the Cambodian military; and (2) Al Haig's missions to Phnom Penh.

With regard to (1), the White House tried to supplement the paltry $7.9 million MAP program for Cambodia, established by presidential determination on May 21, through Indonesia and Thailand providing Cambodia with some of their MAP-funded equipment. However, the White House refused to face up to the fact that, under law, such transfers would have to be paid out of Cambodian MAP funds. The State Department was committed to report to Congress all such MAP transfers by September 30, 1970, and periodically thereafter.

The issue was further complicated in the case of Indonesia by how these White House pressures were creating some serious internal political problems within Suharto's government.

At some juncture, I can't recall the date, Kissinger, before leaving Washington for the weekend, left with me a request to send a priority telegram to Ambassador Swank in

Phnom Penh instructing him to seek Lon Nol's approval for (a) Indonesian military teams to provide field training for FANK, and (b) Thai AF planes to deliver supplies by air to FANK field forces. In carrying out HAK's request, I included a sentence in the telegram to the effect that it was only fair to point out to Lon Nol that costs for such Indonesian and Thai support were chargeable to Cambodian MAP funds. Lon Nol rejected the proposal out-of-hand. HAK was furious.

Q: Well, I can see why he was, but you, as a State Department official had to answer to Congress on all these matters.

GREEN: Yes. Moreover, it was not just a question of being honest and avoiding serious misunderstandings, but also a question of how such Indonesian and Thai involvement would spread the poison of Cambodia into other parts of Southeast Asia. Clearly our sights had to be set on damage control.

Earlier I mentioned Al Haig's missions to Phnom Penh as being my second biggest headache. I tried unsuccessfully to have a State Department Cambodian specialist accompany Haig on his trips to Phnom Penh. I received only the skimpiest of oral reports form Haig about his trips, which left Mike Rives upset because he was excluded from Haig's meetings with Lon Nol. A more fundamental objection to Haig's missions was the way he was deliberately undercutting Rives and, after November 1970, Coby Swank. He arranged to establish an exclusive CIA channel between himself and Tom Enders, Swank's deputy, who was considered to be more activist and gung-ho (like Haig). From then on, it was Haig who was running the “sideshow,” step-by-step building up our defense assistance team, replacing Fred Ladd (the sensible military adviser Alex Johnson had originally selected) with the loud-mouth bumptious General Mataxis, and generally undercutting any credible Cambodian claims to being neutral. Spiro Agnew's trip to Phnom Penh in late July 1970 was a PR disaster, with photos in the world press showing Agnew escorted by highly visible machine-gun toting SS men. Rives' efforts to get these men not

to display weapons so openly resulted in Rives being fired from his job. Haig had been spoiling for an opportunity to have Rives removed.

Q: Did you visit Phnom Penh during the period 1970-71?

GREEN: Yes, twice. My first visit was in early July 1970, accompanied by my wife. We were traveling with Secretary Rogers, but for some reason he decided to stay in Saigon and sent us on to Phnom Penh for three days before rejoining his party in Saigon. Lisa and I stayed with Mike Rives. He had only a few officers on his staff at that time. In fact, he had no chauffeur, so that when he took us to the Paris Restaurant (excellent cuisine) the first evening, he drove the limousine separated from Lisa and me by the glass partition. (It's funny how little details like that remain fixed in one's memory.) Another thing I remember about this visit, which was the first of any Washington official during that period, was the good conversations in French that Mike Rives and I had with Lon Nol and Sirik Matak. Of the two, Sirik Matak was more impressive with his considerable experience in diplomacy (Japan and the Philippines) and with his command of governmental operations, for he was in real charge of the Cabinet, just as Lon Nol was of the FANK.

I had good, detailed briefings by Mike Rives, Fred Ladd, Andy Antippas and others in the small mission.

They had mixed feelings about the foreign press corps and the visits of US congressmen and other VIPs. The views of such visitors tend to be too assertive, hawkish and optimistic. The visitors seemed to be surprised how much better things looked in Phnom Penh than they had been led to believe. In fact, one group of five House members I met in Phnom Penh were irritated with the State Department for being so cautious about their visiting Cambodia.

It was clear to me that Mike Rives had his problems with the foreign press whose numbers had dwindled from 100 in May down to 40 while I was there. These problems seemed to

be related to Mike's shyness and unfamiliarity with how to handle the press. Mike also needed an experienced administrative officer who spoke French.

On the other hand, Mike was highly knowledgeable, hard-working and courageous. He clearly deserved far more appreciation for his accomplishments than he got from Al Haig and the White House.

Aside from my Embassy briefings, by far my most interesting conversation was with French Ambassador Dauge, who had a wide range of information sources (businessmen, missionaries, planters, government advisors). Dauge pointed out that the North Vietnamese in Cambodia treated the populace discreetly, never stealing, paying for their food and services, ever seeking good will and honoring the name of Sihanouk which resonates well with the peasantry making up 85% of the Cambodian population. At the same time, the North Vietnamese have made no real effort to set up political cells, relying for that purpose on the Khmer Rouge, long opposed to Sihanouk.

Dauge attached more importance to the Khmer Rouge than did any other official I met in Cambodia. In his words: “Hanoi has been carefully training Cambodians in Hanoi for the express purpose of supporting the Khmer Rouge against Sihanouk, eventually bringing Cambodia under North Vietnamese domination.” (Quoted from my diary.) Dauge continued: “These Khmer Rouge, unlike the North Vietnamese, are not making the pro-Sihanouk pitch that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces are making in Cambodia.” It is a “curious dichotomy” he concluded, “though I feel that Sihanouk has no future in Cambodia,” one reason being Sihanouk's turning to China rather than to North Vietnam.

I mention the foregoing in some detail because, quite frankly, I did not comprehend then, or for some time thereafter, the importance of the Khmer Rouge, or who they were or what were their goals. I guess I had them confused with the Khmer Krom, the Khmer Serei and the Khmer Communists. They were not conventional communists but rather extreme zealots out to remake the whole nation in the bloodiest manner.

At the time of this July 1970 visit, there was a strong nationalistic upsurge, with young Cambodians flocking to the colors. Phnom Penh was spotlessly clean and superficially peaceful, though ancient Khmer-Tonkinese hatreds boded ill and there were thousands of Vietnamese refugees crowded into holding areas along the Bassac River banks. Atrocities against Vietnamese refugees were widely reported, as were Vietnamese atrocities against Cambodians.

I was well aware that the FANK was no match for the well trained and armed North Vietnamese and that the best we could hope for was to keep as much of Cambodia out of North Vietnamese control as possible and to retain as much of Cambodia's spirit of nationalism and appearances of neutrality as possible. In any case, we had to live with the realities of strong Congressional and public opposition to the US getting further involved in Cambodia.

Flying back to Saigon, Lisa and I rejoined Secretary Rogers' party headed for the Far East Chiefs of Mission Conference in Tokyo which I chaired. Since there were no US representatives from Cambodia at the conference, it became my responsibility to provide the overall assessment of prospects in Cambodia. The record of that meeting has me concluding that, “Cambodia faces a tenacious and resourceful enemy, a collapsing economy and insufficient outside assistance.” However, these are somewhat offset by “true nationalism, Buddhist antipathy toward the atheist aggressors, and a countryside generally hostile to the North Vietnamese and their puppet Sihanouk...”

When I visited Phnom Penh in May 1971, in the company of Jack Irwin and Bill Sullivan, we were concerned, as we said in our report, “how the weight of official Americans in Phnom Penh, both civilian and military, were helping to suffocate Khmer nationalism and enthusiasm.” We recommended that the size of our mission not exceed 100, that marginal programs be phased out, and that DOD should consider waiving end-user check requirements in order to keep down the numbers of Americans in Cambodia. By May 1971 a supplemental appropriations bill provided for well over $200 million in both economic and

military assistance for Cambodia. Khmer leadership was more seasoned, having withstood many challenges. However the leaders were less sanguine, more sober about prospects. Rather than seeing victory in the offing as they had in 1970, they were gearing up for the long haul, with FANK now 200,000 strong in comparison to 35,000 in 1970.

Yet more and more of Cambodia was passing under NVN control so that only Phnom Penh and the land corridors to Sihanoukville and to Thailand via Battambang were relatively secure.

It remained pretty much that way through my remaining time as Assistant Secretary, with US bombers pounding away at NVN positions largely in eastern Cambodia. The fate of Cambodia was now inexorably linked with the fate of Vietnam. It might have been otherwise.

Q: It seems to me that this whole tragic saga throws a lot of light on personalities, as indeed all such crises do. First of all there is the question of Nixon and Kissinger. Of the two, who would you say was the more determined to go ahead with the US ground force involvement in the Cambodian incursion?

GREEN: I would say Nixon, because he had an absolute “thing” about being the tough guy (like General Patton), especially so that the North Vietnamese would not take us for granted and would eventually be willing to settle on a peaceful solution. And, of course, Nixon had a lot of people in Saigon, both US and Vietnamese, who agreed with that tactic, including Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams.

Kissinger, in order to solidify his standing with the President and to weaken that of Rogers, was the President's willing accomplice in carrying out the fateful decision. But I cannot see Kissinger as urging the president to make the decision he did, for it brought Kissinger a lot of grief, as he must have known it would. Shawcross' “Sideshow,” a best seller, is

a blistering attack in the Nixon-Kissinger policies toward Cambodia, with Shawcross' comments about Kissinger being excessively unfair.

Q: Your mention of trying to keep down the number of American officials in Cambodia reminds me of a long interview I did with Andy Antippas, who...

GREEN: Oh, yes, I remember him well as one of the best informed officers we ever had in Cambodia.

Q: Andy said that we were also flying advisers into Phnom Penh in the morning, but they would leave at night. The idea was that they didn't stay overnight, so they didn't count on the total number. That sort of circumvention of Congress was being too clever by half.

GREEN: You're right; and of course people on the Hill including investigative staffers (of whom there are plenty) know, or get to know, all about such shenanigans. You can't operate that way.

Q: What about the problem Coby Swank faced when he must have known that Al Haig was by-passing him in order to deal with Coby's deputy, Tom Enders?

GREEN: Coby just learned to live with the problem. It didn't affect his standing with the State Department. On the other hand, Tom Enders was running risks by his by-passing official channels in dealing directly with Al Haig. Tom Enders has always been an ambitious officer, but he could see that, while events were elevating his standing with the White House, they might have the opposite effect with the State Department. I know, because Tom broke down at one point and confessed to me how all these events were affecting his sense of duty toward the Secretary of State. This was no play-acting performance. He was genuinely in anguish.

Q: Let's talk about the role of the foreign service officer when faced with carrying out a presidential decision with which he disagrees. I recall there were several on Kissinger's

staff, including one FSO (Bill Watts), who resigned over the president's decision to commit US ground forces in the Cambodian incursion of April 30, 1970.

GREEN: Alex Johnson has as interesting passage on this subject in his book, The Right Hand of Power. He points out that some 50 junior FSO's, none of whom served in Southeast Asia, addressed “a protest letter” to the Secretary of State over this decision. They were perfectly entitled to do this through the dissent channel, so long as it remained private and confidential. But they naively xeroxed multiple copies for a maximum number of signatures. Copies of this letter reached the press. When Nixon found out about this, he ordered the Secretary to fire all who signed. Rogers and Alex eventually calmed the President down and none were fired.

Q: Yes, but to get back to those who did resign on Kissinger's staff. How about you? After all you opposed the President. Did you at any point consider resigning over his decision?

GREEN: Yes, but then we FSO's are like our military—we carry out orders once those orders are determined and issued. Moreover, in my case, I managed to stay on to fight further battles over our Cambodian policy, at least insofar as successfully opposing White House efforts to involve Thailand and Indonesia in its losing proposition.

Q: I think that's a good place to stop, unless you had any further involvement in Cambodia after 1973.

GREEN: Only in 1981 when I chaired the State Department's Advisory Panel on Indo-Chinese Refugees. By that time, the war in Vietnam had ended disastrously, although the disaster was even greater in Cambodia where Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge was still visiting some of the worst horrors in modern history on his fellow Cambodians, as well as on Vietnamese who were trying to flee from Vietnam through Cambodia to Thailand.

I surreptitiously spent a day in a part of westernmost Cambodia which was not under Pol Pot's control. But all of that is covered in the report issued by our Advisory Panel in 1981.

End of interview